

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Revision Scoping Comments Summary December 2003–March 2004

BACKGROUND

As directed by Section 304(g) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, the Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Act of 1997, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (the Refuge) initiated a planning process to revise its comprehensive conservation plan, which was approved in 1985. Revising the plan allows the Refuge to incorporate changing public interests and new scientific information, and as such, will guide management direction of the Refuge for the next 15 years.

Refuge and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (the Service) regional office staff began preparing for the public scoping period during fall 2003. A planning e-mail address was created; by December, more than 3,200 planning newsletters and associated issues workbooks had been distributed nationally to federal, state, and local agencies and government officials; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); local businesses; Native corporations and government representatives; and the general public. In February 2004, five public open-house meetings were held in local communities on the Kenai Peninsula and in the city of Anchorage to further solicit input from the public.

INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of public scoping comments received as of March 12, 2004. One hundred and fourteen completed issues workbooks were returned to the Anchorage Regional Office by that date. In addition, Kenai Refuge staff hosted five public open house meetings at which people were invited to submit comments on “issue sheets,” blank index cards, or issues workbooks. Some other comments were received via e-mail and telephone (telephone comments were transcribed by Rob Campellone). A breakdown of the various sources and formats of received comments is given in section 1, which follows.

It is important to note that the comments analyzed here do not constitute the only source of information for identifying important planning issues. General public comments are expected to “trickle in” until a draft plan is completed and made available for public review (indeed, some additional comments have already been received since the March 12 cut-off date for development of this summary). In addition, the State of Alaska has submitted formal issues for Service consideration, and the Service itself has identified potential planning issues. State and Service issues have not been analyzed as part of this summary.

PROCESS

A total of 270 public comments had been received when this analysis began. A “comment” could be an issues workbook, issue sheet, comment card, or a voice or e-mail message. For several reasons, counting and comparing the number of comments that fall into one category or another is generally not recommended. Comments are not votes, because not all members of the public had an equal chance to participate. In addition, not all comments reflect a single opinion or issue. Because a single comment might contain a multitude of opinions (an issues workbook, for example, counts as one comment although it covers a range of topics), the task of meaningfully comparing the number of times a given issue is raised across all comments is nearly impossible.

For this analysis, all comments were coded with key words and corresponding numbers that represent the theme or themes expressed. Coding is essentially the process of distilling comments, or breaking them down into their constituent parts. For example, the following statement might be assigned codes of “access,” “aircraft,” and “hunting.”

Regarding aircraft access on the Chickaloon Flats—“Wheeled aircraft should have unlimited access to land on any area below high tidemark. Tides will wash out any tundra tire tracks in the mud flats. This area provides excellent hunting (esp. waterfowl), with very limited access. We hunted all over for years, and now find out it's illegal.”

Codes are easier to organize, summarize, and present than lengthy blocks of text. However, some information is always lost in the process of coding, and there is also a subjective element to coding. For this reason, most of the themes (coded categories) presented in this analysis are accompanied by verbatim-comment excerpts. The excerpts are meant to illustrate the theme, and give the reader a basis for evaluating the appropriateness of the assigned code(s). When opinions on a given coded-theme were divergent, excerpts that illustrate both sides of the issue are provided.

After coding was completed, all coded data and corresponding full-text comments were entered into an Access database. The database contains fields that match questions asked in the issues workbook. Comments received in different formats (e.g., e-mails, comment cards) were entered into the most appropriate fields. For example, an e-mail comment that read, “It’s important to me that I can continue to access the Refuge with my floatplane” was entered into the field corresponding to question 3 from the workbook, “What do you value most about the Kenai NWR?”—even though the e-mail respondent was not necessarily asked that question. The database also contains information about the source and format of each comment.

The main body of this analysis is organized into three parts: 1) what people value about the Refuge, 2) what they perceive as threats to those values, and 3) issues that emerge from analysis of values and threats. The themes (identified by italicized headings) in the first two sections are presented in rough order of frequency; that is, the themes most frequently described by respondents appear before those that were described relatively

less frequently. As noted previously, themes were not counted in a traditional sense, so this ordering is based largely on a subjective “feel” for the data that emerged after much reading and analysis. The ordering is *only* intended to facilitate organization of this document; it is not meant to imply that certain themes are more or less important than others.

The third and final section, Emergent Issues, was developed by reviewing and contrasting the values and threats described in the first two sections. Each issue is introduced in the form of a question and followed by one or more brief statements that summarize the relevant opinions and concerns expressed by members of the public.

FINDINGS

1. SOURCES OF COMMENTS

Sources of Comments

Source	Count	Percentage of Total
Government*	2	1
NGO	4	2
Public	264	97
TOTAL	270	—

*Alaska State comments will be treated separately.

Format of Comments

Format	Count	Percentage of Total
E-mail/Mail	123	46
Issues Workbook	122	45
Other (phone, comment card, etc.)	25	9

2. WHAT PEOPLE VALUE ABOUT KENAI REFUGE

Although many specific values can be inferred from comments about perceived threats (see section 3 subsequently), this section draws primarily on explicit statements about Refuge values, especially responses to question 3 from the issues workbook: “What do you value most about the Kenai NWR?”

Public Use/Recreation

A substantial majority of all of the comments addressed public use in some manner.

Many people who commented are frequent users of the Refuge. Half of the people who answered question 1 in the issues workbook indicated that they visit the Refuge 20 or more times per year.

Q1. How many times do you visit the Kenai NWR each year?

Times Per Year?	Count	Percentage of Total
0–5 visits	19	17
6–10 visits	16	15
11–15 visits	7	6
16–20 visits	13	12
20+ visits	55	50
TOTAL	110	—

Members of the public described a wide array of activities that they engage in on the Refuge. The most popular activities are listed on the following page.

Q2. What are your favorite activities to engage in while visiting the Kenai NWR?^a

Activity	Count	Percentage of Total^b
Fishing	80	19
Hiking	63	15
Hunting	61	14
Boating	45	10
Camping	26	6
Viewing Wildlife	22	5
Skiing	18	4
Sightseeing	13	3
Photography	13	3
Trapping	13	3
Snowmobiling	12	3
Picking Berries	11	3

^a Activities with less than 10 responses are not listed here

^b Percentages are rounded (up) to the nearest whole number; they represent the proportion of all activities listed (respondents often listed several activities).

Wilderness and Wilderness-Like Recreation Settings

People highly value the undeveloped, primitive, wild, wilderness character of the refuge as a setting for their recreational activities. Wilderness-themed comments seemed to be the most frequent kind of response to question 3 in the issues workbook: “What do you value most about the Kenai NWR?” Some illustrative examples of these comments include the following:

[I value...]

Undeveloped wilderness; the opportunity to leave civilization, crowds, and “things” behind for a while.

Wilderness qualities—the opportunity to spend time in a quiet, relatively undeveloped area away from a large number of people and mechanization.

A “wilderness” characteristic in most areas, little development, free access and unlimited recreation opportunity.

In some cases, respondents specifically described uncrowded conditions and/or a lack of motor-vehicles as the setting qualities that they value most.

I also put a huge value on the non-motorized designation of the NWR. NO 4 WHEELERS!!!

[I value...]

Wilderness experience -- Few or no motor vehicles.

Its wilderness and inaccessibility to motor vehicles.

...a place to go to enjoy nature away from the crowds. As more people move to the Peninsula and more development occurs the refuge will be more and more critical to my spiritual and mental well being.

Access for Recreation Activities

People also highly value having accessible recreation opportunities on the Refuge. Next to setting qualities, variations on the theme of recreational access constituted the most frequent response to question 3 in the issues workbook. Following are some illustrative examples of access-related responses:

[I value...]

Proximity of road access to otherwise wilderness areas.

Plentiful wildlife, numerous hiking trails, fairly easy access even in winter...

Access to fishing and hunting areas

Access! I can still do all of those activities without major restriction. What is happening to the Chugach is disgusting! This is mainly the snowmachine access that is an issue but at least we can still do it on the refuge without having to prove we are doing it for subsistence reasons.

Easy access to remote wilderness in my float plane.

For some respondents, “close to home” was an important access sub-theme. These people described the Refuge as particularly accessible because of its proximity to where they live.

It's so close to home, a short ride on a snow machine and I can start trapping.

[I value...] the closeness to my home in Soldotna and the ability to very quickly to be in the woods away from everyone.

Closest public land to my home.

Facilities

Although primitive/wilderness settings were frequently cited as important attributes of Kenai Refuge, a number of people also commented favorably on existing, new, and upgraded facilities.

(Positive changes) - Skilak Loop Road development, i.e., upper and lower Skilak Campgrounds, Hidden Lake Campground. They offer a great place to take elementary school classroom for day or overnight trips.

I like the few additional improved campsites and day parking areas with outhouse facilities.

The road system has improved.

I really like the new fishing boardwalks and parking areas in the moose range meadows area.

Upgrades to Upper Skilak Landing, new Upper Skilak Landing Trail, improvements at Jim's Landing, efforts to protect riverbanks, and interpretive materials (Upper Skilak Landing, Skilak Overlook pull out, Kenai River Trail, Jim's) have all been positive and appreciated changes in the Kenai NWR.

In the issues workbook, we asked respondents to rate existing facilities on the Refuge. About 60 percent of respondents indicated that existing facilities meet their needs. Slightly smaller percentages (42 percent and 52 percent, respectively) thought that existing cabins and campgrounds meet their needs.

Facilities Evaluations from the Issues Workbook (approximately^a 100 responses)

	Does not meet my needs (% of responses)	Is sufficient for my needs (% of responses)	More than meets my needs (% of responses)
Number of restrooms	12	61	27
Condition of restrooms	9	62	29
Number of information/interpretive signs	10	59	31
Location of information/interpretive signs	8	63	29
Condition of hiking trails	13	56	31
Condition of canoe trails	7	63	30
Availability of public use cabins	28	42	30
Number of campgrounds	19	52	29
Condition of campgrounds	9	62	29
Overall quantity and condition of facilities	6	57	37

^aThe actual number of responses for each individual item ranged from 83 to 113.

Wildlife Conservation and Habitat Protection

Fish- and wildlife-oriented Refuge recreation is highly valued by the public. However, some people value the Kenai Refuge primarily for its role in the conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats—rather than as a recreation setting.

[I value...]

...the Refuge as a habitat area where wildlife can remain relatively undisturbed.

...protection of wildlife.

...preservation of area (including appropriate management and helpful KNWR staff), healthy wildlife populations (including fish, birds, and mammals), intact ecosystems.

Maintaining fish and wildlife in as near to their abundance and condition as they were in 1900.

3. WHAT PEOPLE PERCEIVE AS THREATS TO THE THINGS THEY VALUE
Increasing Public Use

Increasing public use of Kenai Refuge was one of the most commonly perceived threats identified in public comments (although the threat was often framed in terms of access—see subsequent text). Many respondents described dramatic increases in fishing activity on the Kenai River, particularly with respect to guides and guided use. Some respondents were also concerned about increases in motorized use and use of the canoe-trails area.

According to respondents, increased use may threaten recreation opportunities and experience quality as well as habitat conditions.

Fishing/Fishing Guides

River crowding is an increasing problem. From my viewpoint you have too many guides on the river. I think you should look at limiting the number of guides (both fishing and tour)

The proliferation of guides has put so many boats on the river that it's hard for me and my family to find a place to fish. They bring so many people and drop offs just line the banks. It's just terrible. For peace and serenity fishing before 6AM and after 9PM is necessary. I'm ready to sell my boat! I'm disgusted! I've fished the river since 1966.

There is an increasing number of river guides and a decreasing regard for the common sense rules of the river. Specifically, boats traveling unnecessarily close to our shore and increasing the wake damage. We've owned our property for twelve years and have slowly seen our bank erode. I'm sure it is happening in the refuge as well.

Motorized Activities

[There is] unchecked motorized use such as motoring on the Moose River, snowmachining on the Caribou Hills, flight seeing all over the refuge.

The great increase in winter motorized use in the last 10–15 years negatively affects my use of the refuge. I can't ski the Caribou Hills because of the reckless behavior of the snowmobilers.

There is increasing mechanized recreation and an inadequate effort to protect opportunities for "quiet" users. Allowing increasing industrial use by oil and gas companies has increased the threat of habitat destruction, pollution, and restrictions to public access in certain areas.

Canoe Areas

People [are] loving it to death. The canoe trails are seeing a lot more traffic than in years past. Not everyone is good about cleaning up after themselves or as courteous as in the past.

Too much advertising of the canoe trails. Now [there are] too many people on them. Increased use of Swanson River canoeing areas has detracted from the area e.g., at nearly all of the "pull outs" there are human feces and toilet paper.

Experience/Facility/Habitat Degradation

The burgeoning growth and development of tourism [is a problem]. Backcountry habitat degradation/fragmentation and displacement of wildlife are brought about by overuse from recreationists and an expanding human population in-state.

Because of increasing population and a consequent rise in refuge visitation you are going to see more habitat destruction and more frequent user conflicts in all areas. Your planning should include strategies for beefing up oversight and enforcement.

[I'm concerned about...] Maintaining the quality of the visitor experience, maintaining facilities (trails, campgrounds, roads, etc) and wildlife habitat in an era of increased visitor use and shrinking budgets.

Access Restrictions

Opinions about access restrictions on the Refuge were very much divided. Some people who commented on access expressed concerns about what they perceived to be overly-restrictive Refuge policies. In particular, they commented on aircraft restrictions (especially at Chickaloon Flats), snowmachine restrictions, and nonmotorized wheeled-vehicle restrictions. On the other hand, a nearly equal portion of respondents called for *more* access restrictions (especially for snowmachines) to protect experience opportunities and habitat.

Too Many Access Restrictions

General

If we can not access the range, what good is it? What do we need management for if we can't use it or get to it?

[There is] inadequate access. How can we utilize the refuge to its fullest under the present restrictions?

Too much area in the refuge is closed to motorized access.

Airplanes

Not enough access. Airplanes should be allowed to land in a lot more places. They don't hurt anything. Access is severely limited by all means.

Most of the Kenai Wilderness is closed to aircraft. This needs to change. This restriction protects what? Aircraft is the cleanest way to access this country!

I used to hunt moose during the whole moose season with my floatplane. Now I am limited to just over a week. Where we hunt no one would be able to access anyway on foot because it would be too hard to pack out a moose. I wish we could have a longer season to fly in.

The refuge has begun to enforce a little-known landing restriction on the Chickaloon Flats area, even though the areas where it is legal to land are difficult to decipher, more dangerous to land at than nearby sites and do not offer adequate access to the resources in the area.

Snowmachines

I believe the regulations regarding snowmobile activities within the Reserve need to be modified. Far too often snowmachines are not allowed in the Caribou lake ptarmigan head area when we have 2.5 to 3 feet of snow simply because of lack of snow on the Soldotna side.

Maintain existing snowmachine access. Access is allowed in high country of Caribou Hills, no access above timber on the Tustemena Bench.

Bicycles and Carts

I would like to see wheelbarrow/cart use and bicycle use allowed on refuge roads not open to vehicle traffic. I find it difficult to believe that we damage roads by hauling moose out in carts.

I would like to see the use of mountain bikes on all gravel roads (gas well roads). Horses can be used on these roads and I feel that the horses tear up the roads and trails more than a mountain bike.

Not Enough Access Restrictions

General

Maintain [the] true wilderness aspects of refuge; while public access should still be allowed and facilitated, the access shouldn't infringe on the natural ecosystems or negatively affect wildlife populations.

Incremental annual loss of wilderness values and the wildlife habitat of the refuge by encroachments of refuge boundaries and common illegal access by aircraft, off road vehicles and snowmachines [is a significant problem]. Is anybody monitoring these losses even?

Snowmachines

Would like to see more areas closed to snowmobiles particularly in areas close to town. Also enforce closures in existing areas

Clearly recreational use of snowmobile use on Refuge such as is now occurring in Caribou Hills is not traditional and should be managed and where appropriate curtailed or limited to a traditional activity such as trapping or hunting or travel between villages. The cumulative recreational use of Caribou Hills snowmobile use is damaging and not traditional.

New machines have opened up country that was not accessible to snowmachines. Some identification of X/C Ski traditional use and a "Turnagain Pass" solution (designated areas) could be a good idea.

Airplanes

Willow lake, Camp Fire, Duckling, Nest, Kayak, Yugok and Arrow Lakes should be included in the no-airplane motorized canoe system. So should the East Fork

of the Moose and its string of lakes. These areas are easily accessed from the road system. Keep the planes out.

Refuge Management

Refuge management activities and approaches with respect to fire, facilities, law enforcement, hunting and trapping, and natural-objects collection were perceived as threats (or potential threats) by a substantial number of people.

Fire/Habitat Management

Some respondents regarded fire as an important but neglected habitat management tool, while others were primarily concerned with wildfire risk and the safety of people and property.

80% of the refuge has poor habitat for moose. The burns have grown up. The burn at Mystery Creek was a joke. It took too many years to do it, and it was way too small!

The lack of letting the forest burn naturally, the habitat for many Refuge species is deteriorating quickly. [need for] burn or logging — clearing.

I understand and accept the value of Wilderness fires and the desire to provide healthy regrowth and habitat for wildlife. I oppose road building for this purpose. Aerial management ok if feasible and enough equipment and management available to protect nearby communities.

A buffer zone between cities and the Refuge that will stop fires (either natural or prescribed) to place people in danger. Habitat manipulation is the only solution to permanently draw moose away from the population centers. Too many moose on the roads.

I am interested in what if any steps are being taken East of Adkins Road in Sterling to make a fire break to protect private property.

Facilities

Opinions on facilities were divided, with some respondents worried about insufficient or deteriorating facilities and others worried about modifications that change the character of an area.

If you are going to have trails then you need to maintain them to proper standards. This does not mean all trails need to be handicapped accessible. A refuge such as the KNWR should have a wide variety of trails available. But whether they are primitive back country trails or paved trails to allow handicapped accessibility they all need to be maintained at the standard necessary for each type of trail.

Skilak Loop Road is usually a mess! Paving it would be an excellent option.

Skyline Trail "improvements" — rework/remove of trail has taken the challenge and difficulty of trail down (plenty of other "moderate" or "easy" trails for public to hike).

Several parking areas that gave access to some popular fishing spots were destroyed last spring. A few were safety hazards but most were not. Now it is more difficult for folks to access the river on foot and the remaining spots are more crowded.

People who responded to the issues workbook indicated that most existing Refuge facilities meet or more-than-meet their needs. However, almost 30 percent of respondents indicated that the availability of public cabins does *not* meet their needs, and about 20 percent indicated that the number of Refuge campgrounds similarly fails to meet their needs. It is interesting to note the divergent opinions regarding public cabins and campgrounds; nearly equal percentages of respondents also indicated that these facilities *more* than meet their needs.

	Does not meet my needs (% of responses)	Is sufficient for my needs (% of responses)	More than meets my needs (% of responses)
Availability of public use cabins	28	42	30
Number of campgrounds	19	52	29

Law Enforcement

Opinions about law enforcement were also divided. Some respondents described lack of law enforcement as a threat, while others described law enforcement (or enforcement personnel) as threats themselves.

Lack of enforcement of hunting, fishing reg's is most notable in area along Kenai River.

Enforcement should be done w/o bias or overzealous attitudes, for instance, don't assume someone is guilty of anything. Most officers do a great job, just have encountered "attitude" in the past.

[I'm concerned about the...] poor attitude of enforcement personnel that work here in summer and fall and don't live here year round.

Poor public support because of overbearing, self righteous attitude of the enforcement officers who contact resource users in the field, especially the ones who do not permanently live here, or are just summer help.

Hunting and Trapping

Opinions about hunting and trapping were split as well. Some respondents feared the loss of opportunities, while others called for increased restrictions on activities—especially bear-baiting and trapping near popular trails.

Closing Skilak Loop to hunting was a bad deal. I used to hunt rabbits in the winter and fish out there. This was upsetting at the time and still bothers me.

Animals should not be hunted in their own homes. Aerial hunting should be banned completely! Agencies such as yours should teach people to respect and love wild areas and their creatures - current system far too exploitive.

[I'm concerned because...] the opportunities to bear-bait are shrinking each year as the refuge keeps putting areas off limits.

Bear baiting should not be allowed on the refuge. Although it occurs on a small part of the refuge, it does not pass the test of the highest level of sportsmanship. Hunting programs on refuges should set examples of high ethical standards and sportsmanship. Clearly, shooting bears over 55 gallon drums of bait does not meet the test.

Trapping restrictions too limiting on trail system - 200 yds from trail is plenty - not 1 mile!

Trapping should be prohibited anywhere within 1 mile of refuge trails, trailheads, roads, campgrounds and other facilities. I have had 2 dogs caught in unmarked leg-hold traps within 1/2 mile of a trailhead while hiking on a trail.

Collection of natural materials and objects

Although only a small number of people (eight) commented specifically on natural-object collection, all of them expressed surprise at the current Refuge regulation that makes such activity illegal, and all of them suggested that a change is in order.

It is simply unbelievable that harvesting berries, antlers, mushrooms, and other edible plants in the NWR is illegal. I have been doing all of these activities in the Moose Range / WR for over 30 years, and it does no harm to the ecosystem and greatly benefits me and my family - lowbush cranberries especially have been a staple for us. This should not even be an issue. Harvesting edible plants and antlers should be legal!

Non-commercial, personal use collecting should be permitted as an encouragement of enjoying nature's bounty and healthy wildlands - commercial quantity and collecting for resale should continue to be prohibited.

Oil and Gas Infrastructure and Activities

A number of respondents expressed concerns about existing oil and gas developments and the future of related infrastructure.

I'm concerned with the Oil/Gas exploration. With it will come roads and more areas closed to trapping.

I don't like to see pristine areas become developed on the refuge. Every year more and more man-made infrastructure (roads, oil pads, pipelines, campgrounds, highways, utility ROW) impacts pristine natural areas.

I don't like continued and expanded oil/gas development in the Refuge. I realize they have preexisting leases, but that doesn't make it more palatable. Refuge staff needs to watch oil/gas development like a starving eagle watches for fat salmon.

The oil fields should be returned to wildlife habitat. The main road in the Swanson River area should be left for nonmotorized access for public recreation (including the use of mountain bikes for wildlife related recreation). Other roads may be kept to provide fore breaks for a prescribed burning plan, if needed for that. Otherwise, rehabilitate all roads, bridges, pads.

Make the Oil companies live up to the letter of their promise. They were supposed to be gone already! Make them pull out ALL of their roads and pads and structures and illegal dumps and rehab the area for wildlife habitat.

Vulnerable or Especially Threatened Places

In the issues workbook, respondents were asked to list specific places on the Refuge that they value or perceive as threatened. People who commented in other formats also frequently described specific threatened places. The most frequently listed places were the Kenai River, Chickaloon Flats, Skilak Lake, Tustemena Lake area, Swanson River area, and Mystery Creek/Mystery Creek Road.

4. EMERGENT ISSUES

The following seven issues were identified by reviewing and comparing the refuge values and threats described by respondents.

1. How will the Refuge balance growing demand for motorized and nonmotorized access with resource and visitor experience protection?

- *Generally Increasing Public Use.* A large number of respondents observed that Refuge use has grown substantially and is likely to continue growing into the foreseeable future.
- *Snowmobiles.* There seems to be a general thinking among some groups that improved technology and increasing snowmobiling participation threatens the places and activities they enjoy. At the same time, some snowmobile enthusiasts

value the Refuge precisely because it is free of the restrictions they encounter in other places.

- *Airplanes.* Some private pilots and pilot groups would like to modify the legal landing area at Chickaloon Flats. They claim that the current landing area is poorly located both in terms of safety and recreational access. They also suggest that modified access would not significantly impact wildlife or other resources.
- *Guided and Nonguided Kenai River Use.* Many respondents suggested that current restrictions on Kenai River use are insufficient to protect resources and visitor safety and experiences. No respondents seemed to think that there should be fewer restrictions on use.
- *Nonmotorized Vehicles.* Respondents who commented on this topic were unanimous in their preference for eliminating the prohibition on using nonmotorized, wheeled vehicles on Refuge roadways.

2. How will the Refuge address large-scale habitat changes (e.g., aging forests, beetle-killed trees) that may impact moose and other high-value wildlife?

- *Forest Succession.* Fire suppression and various constraints on the use of prescribed fire and other means of habitat manipulation have reduced the proportion of early-stage habitats that moose prefer. Some respondents called for increased use of prescribed fire to enhance moose habitat.
- *Fire Risk.* Some respondents expressed concern about the risks to life and property associated with prescribed fire. A few respondents also expressed concern about the risk of catastrophic wildfire on the Kenai Peninsula.

3. How will the Refuge manage existing and potential facilities?

- *Trails.* Based on received public comments, trails are probably the most popular Refuge facilities. However, opinions on how best to manage and maintain Refuge trails are quite mixed. Some respondents called for more maintenance and, in some cases, upgrading to make trails more accessible. On the other hand, some respondents lamented trail changes that have reduced their challenging character.
- *Cabins.* Twenty-eight percent of issues-workbook respondents indicated that the availability of public use cabins on the Refuge does not meet their needs. A nearly identical proportion (30 percent) indicated that the availability of cabins *more than meets* their needs.
- *Parking and Pullouts.* Although no specific questions regarding parking or pullouts were asked in the issues workbook, several respondents commented on the need for improved and/or additional parking and/or pullout areas. These comments are significant because they were unsolicited and because they reflect a unanimous opinion that currently available parking is insufficient.

4. How will the refuge manage oil and gas facilities, especially as they become unproductive and/or are shut down?

- *Fears of Expanded Development.* A number of respondents expressed concerns about additional future oil and gas developments and associated resource impacts and access restrictions. In general, these respondents seemed to have little faith that development will be contained.
- *Site Rehabilitation.* Some respondents suggested that large-scale rehabilitation of oil and gas-related “roads, bridges, and pads” is needed.

5. How will the Refuge preserve wilderness character?

- Wilderness character, in various forms, was the most frequently cited value of the refuge. Among the specific values described by respondents were natural beauty, primitive (undeveloped) conditions, the opportunity to escape crowds and mechanization (solitude), and quiet. Increasing visitor use may threaten these qualities, and various potential refuge-management actions could threaten them as well (e.g., habitat manipulation, cabin construction).

6. How will the refuge enforce regulations that protect people and resources while maintaining a good relationship with the public?

- *Need for Increased Enforcement.* A number of respondents suggested that existing regulations, regarding fishing and motorized use in particular, are not sufficiently enforced—more aggressive enforcement approaches or more enforcement personnel are needed.
- *Negative Enforcement Encounters.* Some respondents suggested that regulations and their enforcement are arbitrary. A few respondents also suggested that seasonal law enforcement personnel “have bad attitudes” and do not understand local people or issues.

7. How will the Refuge address public attitudes regarding consumptive wildlife uses (e.g., hunting and trapping)?

- Although hunting, fishing, and trapping are extremely popular activities on the Refuge, some respondents were strongly opposed to these activities for moral or symbolic reasons. One item of particular concern is bear-baiting. A number of respondents who are themselves hunters or at least do not oppose hunting expressed strong opposition to bear-baiting.

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